

**PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY NOTES**  
**HAMS FORK VEGETATION RESTORATION PROJECT**  
**June 1, 2011**

The first of four public meetings was held on June 1, 2011 from 6:00 to 8:00 in the South Lincoln Training and Events Center in Kemmerer, Wyoming. The meeting was facilitated by Dave Thom, consultant sponsored by the Western Wyoming RC&D Council.

**Attendees:** 36 people signed in that included (approximate):

- 7 – State and county elected officials (or their representatives)
- 7 – Interested individuals
- 5 – Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- 3 – Bureau of Land Management
- 5 – County department officials
- 3 – Environmental interests
- 1 – Timber interest
- 2 – Media (Kemmerer Gazette and Star Valley News)

**Welcome – opening remarks**

Tracy Hollingshead, District Ranger, welcomed the group, discussed the importance of Hams Fork, the bark beetle epidemic, using the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, the collaboration process, and Western Wyoming RC&D Council interest in resource management and building public consensus for action.

Jose Castro, Deputy Forest Supervisor, talked of former Governor Freudenthal's interest, the support of USDA leadership, and successful efforts using HFRA in project planning elsewhere. Restoration is planning for what you want left. This project is a top priority for the Bridger-Teton NF, and the Regional Office has provided funding. Collaboration means everyone gets to be involved and all perspectives are valued.

Rebekah Dillinger, Natural Resource Policy Analyst, Wyoming Governor's Office remarked that Gov. Mead recognizes the bark beetle severity and seeks action in restoring forests. Collaboration is important in achieving balance (not all industry or recreation). The Governor's office is open to comments and needs. She provided her contact information.

Kent Connelly, Chair, Lincoln County Commissioners, expressed concern for catastrophic wildfire, that Lincoln County has been declared a disaster area, the interest from State and national officials, and that this project sets the stage for the rest of the State. The commission values the recreation opportunities in Hams Fork.

**Process Overview and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.**

Dave Thom explained in a power point presentation that the HFRA provides for: identifying hazardous fuel reduction projects, collaboration, and expedited environmental analysis and objection procedures. A proposed action is developed collaboratively by participants and rolled into the environmental analysis.

## **Historical Overview**

Jamie Schoen, Forest Archeologist, provided an interesting chronology of events in the Forest Service and the Hams Fork drainage. A copy is available in the project file.

## **Forest Management Plans and Policies**

Michael Schrotz, Planning, Lands and Information Staff Officer, covered three topics: 1) inventoried roadless policies, 2) forest planning, and 3) landscape scale assessment.

Roadless history dates to the first roadless review in 1972 and to the most recent Roadless Conservation Rule and judicial outcomes. The key concept is to consider effects on roadless (or unroaded) character and how it could change under treatment. Do not confuse with Wilderness. Consider effects on natural integrity, apparent naturalness, remoteness, solitude, primitive recreation, special features, and manageability.

Forest planning began with multiple use plans to the present “land and resource management” (Forest) plans. The Bridger-Teton NF plan was approved in 1990 and is still used (available at: [www.fs.usda.gov/btnf/](http://www.fs.usda.gov/btnf/)). The plan provides 5 management areas that provide objectives, standards and guidelines on Forest management. Revision efforts started some years ago but have been postponed.

A Hams Fork Landscape Scale Assessment is available that provides useful information for current project planning.

## **Forested Vegetation Overview**

Samuel Ainsley, Forestry Technician, provided an overview of the Hams Fork forest types and ages, past and present timber harvest, and the mountain pine beetle epidemic.

- 73% of Hams Fork is forested with a mix of lodgepole and whitebark pine, aspen, and spruce/fir.
- 6% of the area has been harvested since 1965.
- The mountain pine beetle has killed 20-60% of the lodgepole pine stands in an epidemic that started in 2003. Mortality varies from 10% to 90% of trees killed in infested areas. Beetle activity depends on several site factors including tree size and density.
- In response to a question, Samuel reported that aspen has no particular disease problems at this time, but is getting old.

## **Social and Recreation Resources Overview**

Josh Sorenson, Recreation Assistant, discussed the prominent recreation activities including fishing, hunting, off highway vehicle use, and firewood gathering.

## **Vegetation Goals**

Anita DeLong, Team Leader, discussed the following potential vegetation goals for the project.

1. Restore vegetation conditions in whitebark pine, lodgepole pine, aspen and/or sagebrush communities.
2. Remove hazardous trees to enhance public safety along travel corridors and recreational and administrative sites.
3. Reduce fire hazard by reducing fuel loading in coniferous stands, along travel corridors, and adjacent to recreational and administrative sites.
4. Support sustainable resource use by recovering merchantable timber from areas affected by mountain pine beetle and providing wood products to local communities.

### **Open discussion – what’s important about Hams Fork?**

Participants offered the following brief responses to this question as an *initial* sensing for use by FS staff in their work. Anita D recorded on white-board.

- Aspen
- Recreation opportunities
- Recreationists staying in Lincoln County (economics)
- Moose habitat
- Water quality; watershed health and function
- Water supply and quantity
- Grazing
- Access to the national forest
- Cutthroat trout and native aquatic species
- Boreal toads
- Invasive species – weeds
- Endangered animals
- Diverse natural mosaic, species and age, of forest vegetation
- Tall forb and riparian habitat
- A balance of unroaded and roaded areas
- Remote roadless, primitive recreation experiences
- Reduced fire hazard/fire safety

### **Future collaboration meetings:**

Thursday, June 23 6:00pm at the South Lincoln Training and Events Center – Resource conditions; interests, issues, concerns; possible treatment options (room and materials arranged for collaborative discussion)

Thursday, July 7. 9:00am-4:00pm. Field trip to Ham’s Fork. Depart from Kemmerer Ranger District office. Review resources and sites of interest, and review some initial treatment options. (confirmed July 7 in the meeting).

Wednesday, July 13, 6:00pm at the SLTEC – Treatment options, discussion, feedback

Thursday, August 4, 6:00pm at the SLTEC – Proposal, discussion, finalize the proposed action.

### **Wrap-up and informal discussion**

Tracy Hollingshead concluded with several points:

- Appreciation to attendees for time to come to the meeting and ideas offered. Thanked for their commitment to future participation.
- Collaboration is an important and useful part of planning this project.
- Asked that if participants know of any interested persons not present to let the FS know to ensure they get invited to future meetings.
- FS contact information was provided.

The Forest Service interdisciplinary team members introduced themselves. Informal participant discussion ensued at about 7:50 and was done about 8:15pm.

**Recorded by:** Anita DeLong, Project Leader.

**Prepared by:** Dave Thom, Facilitator